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My name is Claudia Tenaglia. I am a resident of Bloomfield and I am a middle school social studies teacher in Hartford Public Schools.

I am writing today in support of Raised Bill 948. I have been teaching for nearly 14 years/I am in my fourteenth year of teaching and (unfortunately) know all too well the negative impact that funding inequity has had for my students.

Where I teach, we have a high percentage (about a third) of students who do not speak English as their native language, some newly arrived with no knowledge of English and in some cases, a low level of literacy in their native language. Hartford Public Schools has the largest percentage of ELL students in the state with about 20% of its students learning English as a second language. I currently have a student who arrived last year from Tanzania. He was in my world geography class as a 7th grader and now this year, sits in my 8th grade U.S. History survey course. There is no push-in or other assistance for him in my class because we have only one ELL teacher for our entire middle school-- spread thin, she maximizes her time by pushing into English classes.

Students such as this need special attention as newcomers, yet there is no special program for them in Hartford. Sitting in an 8th grade class, reading primary source documents, is not helpful for a recent arrival who needs basic English skills. His story is only one of hundreds whose needs are not being served. We need more funding to have an adequate number of English language teachers in our schools, as well as a newcomer curriculum and other curricular support to accommodate these students--many so motivated, so eager to learn, so grateful to be in a classroom where they feel safe--but naturally are struggling to learn in a new language.

That is why I believe this bill must be passed. Our students deserve an excellent education, whether they live in Hartford or New Canaan, Connecticut students have faced unprecedented hardship over the past year, and cannot wait multiple years to attend a fully-funded school.